

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 178368
ORIGIN EUR-12

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DRAFTED BY EUR/WE:AHUGHES:SJR
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MADRID IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL BARCELONA IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 178368

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: US, SP, ETRN

SUBJECT: NTSB TEAM TRAVELING TO SPAIN

REF: HUGHES-MINISTER EATON AUGUST 14 TELECON

1. CONTRARY TO EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION BY DEPARTMENT OF STATE, NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD (NTSB) CHAIRMAN JAMES KING HAS ORDERED A TEAM OF THREE NTSB ACCIDENT INVESTIGATORS TO TRAVEL TO SPAIN JULY 14 ON TWA 905, ARRIVING MADRID JULY 15 AT 0750. INVESTIGATORS ARE LUDWIG BENNER, CHARLES P. HOFFMAN, AND LUIS CARMONA. EMBASSY SHOULD INSTRUCT THE THREE TO REPORT TO EMBASSY AND TAKE NO ACTION WITHOUT EXPLICIT EMBASSY AUTHORIZATION. THIS INSTRUCTION HAS ALSO BEEN PASSED TO NTSB BY THE DEPARTMENT.

2. BACKGROUND OF SITUATION IS THAT NTSB OFFICIAL CALLED EUR/WE JULY 14 TO INFORM THAT NTSB HAD MADE INFORMAL CONTACT WITH LOW-LEVEL SPANISH OFFICIAL WHO HAD "WELCOMED" NTSB OFFER OF ASSISTANCE IN THE SAN CARLOS DISASTER. THE
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 178368

OFFICIAL, CAPTAIN BELLIDO OF THE SUB-OFFICE OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION, HAD APPARENTLY BEEN IN CONTACT WITH JUDGE AUGUSTINE FERRAR OF TORTOSA, WHO REPORTEDLY HAS BEEN GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SAN CARLOS INVESTIGATION

(BELLIDO HAD WORKED WITH NTSB ON THE TENERIFE DISASTER).
EUR/WE OFFICER TOLD NTSB HE DOUBTED THAT BELLIDO COULD

SPEAK FOR GOS BUT THAT IN INTEREST OF MOVING ALONG THE NTSB OFFER OF ASSISTANCE, EUR/WE WOULD TELEPHONE EMBASSY MADRID WHICH WOULD FORMALLY MAKE THE NTSB OFFER TO THE PROPER SPANISH OFFICIALS. EMBASSY THEN CONTACTED BOTH SPANISH MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND FOREIGN MINISTRY TO MAKE OFFER OF NTSB ASSISTANCE, AND WAS TOLD GOS WOULD RESPOND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. NEITHER MINISTRY HAD KNOWLEDGE OF BELLIDO CONTACT WITH NTSB. AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE EMBASSY, STATE THEN DETERMINED THAT INVESTIGATORS SHOULD NOT TRAVEL TO SPAIN IN ADVANCE OF GOS DECISION TO ACCEPT NTSB OFFER, IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBLE IMPRESSION OF US PRESUMPTUOUSNESS OR PRESSURE. WHEN NTSB CHAIRMAN KING WAS INFORMED OF STATE DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTION THAT THE INVESTIGATORS SHOULD REMAIN IN THE US PENDING A GOS RESPONSE, HE NEVERTHELESS ORDERED HIS OFFICERS TO PROCEED ON JULY 14 TO SPAIN. CHRISTOPHER

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